

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-09

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EB-07 H-02 INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4230

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 5461

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, PINS, RP, LY

SUBJECT: HIJACKING--PAL DOMESTIC FLIGHT 181 POSTMORTEM

REF: MANILA 4959 (NOTAL) AND TRIPOLI 0516

1. AT THE DIRECTION OF PRESIDENT MARCOS, UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE CARMELO Z. BARBERO PRESIDED OVER AN INTERAGENCY MEETING ON APRIL 19 TO REVIEW THE LAST PAL HIJACKING AND TO DISCUSS MEASURES AIMED AT PREVENTING THE RECURRENT OF HIJACKING IN THE COUNTRY. PARTICIPATING WERE KEY OFFICIALS OF VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, THE FOUR MAJOR COMMANDS OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND PAL PRESIDENT BENIGNO TODA, JR. AND PAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT RAFAEL IGOA.

2. IGOA TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THE BRASS WERE INTERESTED IN THEIR OWN PET VIEWS AND HE DID NOT THEREFORE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEF THEM ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES ON THE LONG FLIGHT TO BENGHAZI (REPORTED SEPTEL). ONE GENERAL AGAIN CALLED FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR HIJACKERS, TO WHICH IGOA SAID HE OBJECTED STRENuously AS A DANGEROUS ESCALATION FOR BOTH PASSENGERS AND HIJACKED AIRCRAFT ALIKE. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE LINDBERGH LAW (HE MEANT THE DEATH

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PENALTY) DID NOT PREVENT KIDNAPPINGS BUT OFTEN RESULTED

IN THE DEATH OF THE KIDNAPPED.

3. THE MAIN DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE WERE THE APPOINTMENT OF BRIG. GEN. MARIANO CASTANEDA, AIRPORT MILITARY COMMANDER, AS THE SOLE NEGOTIATOR; ALSO, IN THE FUTURE, THE PAL REPRESENTATIVE AT THE AIRPORT WOULD BE A LOWER RANKING OFFICER THAN TODA OR IGOA WHO COULD NOT COMMIT THE COMPANY, THE THEORY BEING THAT IF THE PAL REPRESENTATIVE CONSTANTLY HAD TO CONSULT HIGHER AUTHORITY, RESULTING DELAYS WOULD INCREASE THE CHANCES OF SURRENDER; AND THE DESIGNATION OF A PRESS OFFICER TO ENSURE THAT CORRECT BUT INNOCUOUS INFORMATION BE GIVEN TO REPORTERS.

4. IGOA WAS CRITICAL OF THE APPOINTMENT OF GEN. CASTANEDA WHO WAS IGNORANT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND SO OVERRIDING THAT THE HIJACKERS REFUSED TO TALK TO HIM DURING THE LAST HOURS AT MANILA. IGOA PRIVATELY AGREED THAT THE GOP HAD GOOD REASONS NOT TO HAVE TODA OR HIMSELF AROUND UNLESS ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED.

5. AS FOR THE DESIGNATION OF A PRESS OFFICER, IGOA SAID THAT THE GROUP WAS CRITICAL OF THE PRESS FOR REVEALING SENSITIVE INFORMATION DURING THE HIJACKING SUCH AS THE POSITIONING OF SHARPSHOOTERS AROUND THE AIRPORT AND THE GOP TACTIC OF DELAYING THE DEPARTURE OF THE AIRCRAFT. IGOA POINTED OUT THAT THE PRESS WOULD REPORT WHAT IT SEES IF IT DOES NOT OBTAIN THE INFORMATION OFFICIALLY. HE UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR THE GOP BLACKOUT BUT THIS COULD NOT ERASE THE PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE STATEMENTS PRINTED ABROAD. IN THIS RESPECT, HE WAS ALSO CRITICAL OF THE GOP NEWS BLACKOUT OVER THE PAYMENT OF THE \$300,000 RANSOM AND THE SUBSEQUENT RETURN OF \$250,000. A MORE EFFECTIVE PLOY WOULD BE SIMPLY TO HAVE HAD HIM PHOTOGRAPHED BRINGING BACK THE BAG "WITH THE MONEY." THE UPSHOT OF THE DISCUSSION WAS AGREEMENT TO DESIGNATE A PRESS OFFICER DURING A HIJACKING TO HANDLE THE REPORTERS.

6. IGOA SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THESE MINOR MEASURES WOULD DETER HIJACKING IN THE FUTURE AND THAT HE EXPECTS CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE CASES. PRESS TREATMENT OF THE PRESENT CASE IS ALSO LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER ATTEMPTS, PARTICULARLY AS THE GENERAL IMPRESSION NOW IS THAT THE RANSOM WAS NOT RETURNED. STULL

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